2008 Alaska Regional Ports and Harbors Conference

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Alaska District

January 10-11, 2008

Executive Summary

On 10 and 11 January, over 125 people from local, state and federal government agencies, private transportation businesses and tribal entities responded to an invitation from the USACE to look together at the future of ports and harbors in Alaska.

2008 Conference Goals

- Bring Alaska's marine transportation users, providers and agencies together to discuss future of Alaska's Ports and Harbors
- Identify water resources problems, issues and opportunities facing Alaska
- Work together to identify action items to support development and protect resources
- Discuss long-term vision through panelist presentations and breakout sessions

The Corps presented baseline information and a briefing packet outlining Alaska projects and process

Introductory Speakers included:

- Lois Munson - Dena'ina Elder, Native Village of Eklutna
- Colonel Kevin Wilson - Commander, Alaska District
- Gary Loew - Chief, Civil Works Programs, Integration Division
- George Cannelos - Federal Co-Chair, Denali Commission
- Rich Schiavoni - Chief, Civil Works Programs, Integration Division
- Sarah Barton - Facilitator, RISE Alaska

20 panelists gave short, catalytic presentations

Panel 1 – Commercial Transportation Users

- Steven Borell, Alaska Miners Association
- Bill Deaver, TOTE
- John Goll, Minerals Management Service
- Mike Black, Alaska Dept. of Commerce Community and Economic Development
- Mark Van Dongen, Port MacKenzie

Panel 2 – Commercial Transportation Providers

- Tessa Rinner, Denali Commission
- Jeff Ottesen, Alaska Department of Transportation
- Pat Gamble, Alaska Railroad Corporation
- Gov. Bill Sheffield, Port of Anchorage
- John Stone, State Harbormaster Association
- Ben Ellis, Institute of the North

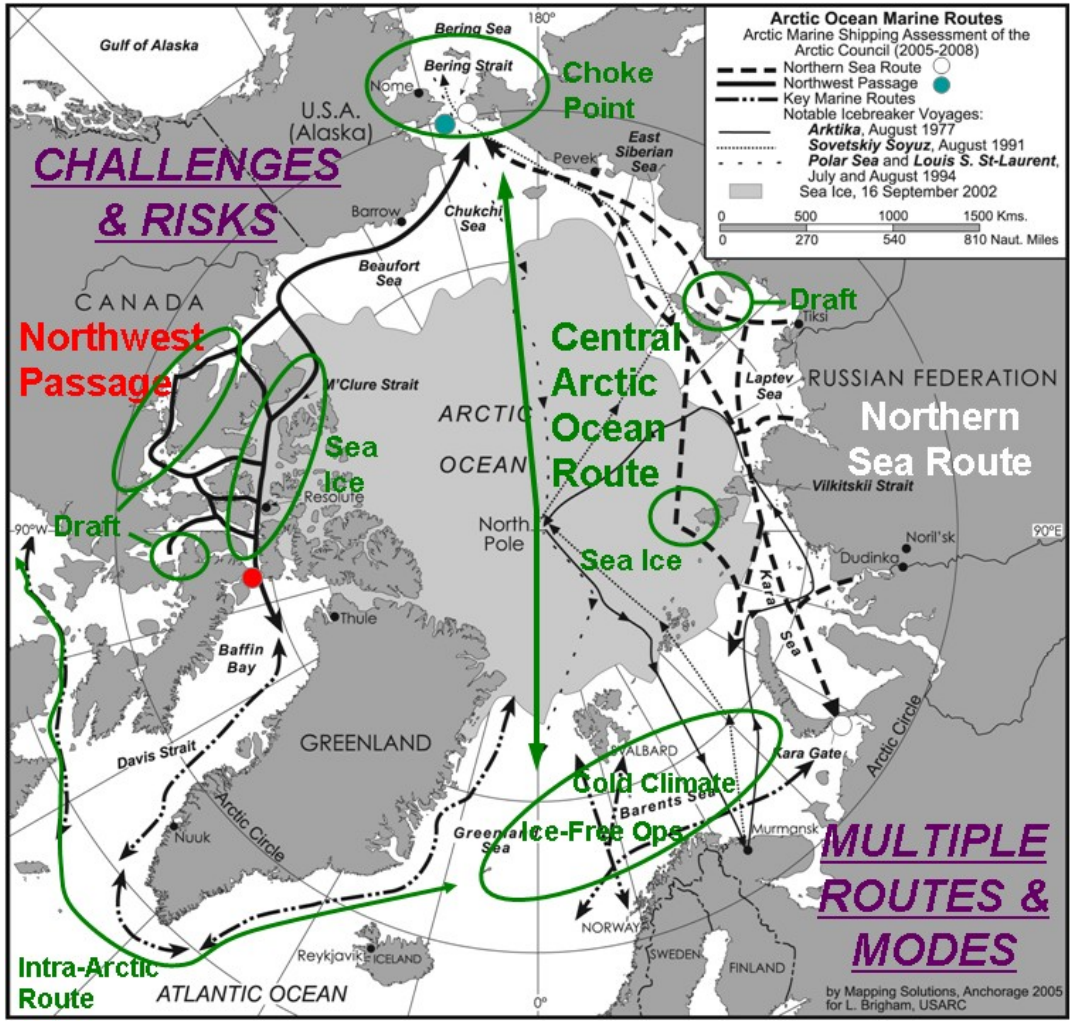
Additional Conference Panelists

Panel 3 – Government Agencies

- Capt. Michael Inman, Response Division 17th USCG District
- Phillip Oates, City of Seward
- Michael Catsi, Southwest Alaska Municipal Conference
- Peter Larsen, Nature Conservancy

Panel 4 – Alaskan Communities

- Bob Juettner, Aleutians East Borough
- Eugene Asicksik, Norton Sound Economic Development Corp. (Former CEO)
- Mayor Siikauraq Whiting, Northwest Arctic Borough
- Tom Harris, Tyonek Native Corporation
- Molly McCammon, Alaska Ocean Observing System



Topics ranged from the Northern Sea Route, ship traffic in the Arctic, global warming, Canadian rail extension to community relocation, barge access and the USACE appropriation process.

The intent was to stimulate thinking among transportation providers and users, government agencies and communities.

Participant comments exhibited much alignment.

Selected Comments from Participants – Why Are We Here Today?

- Partner with USACE to improve process and planning
- Identify how we can work together and collaborate on planning for future of AK ports and harbors
- Address need for a regional system approach for Alaska, instead of competing ports against each other
- Discuss how to ensure development benefits local Alaskans
- Look at alternative energy sources (i.e. geothermal)
- Discuss impact of global warming on arctic (i.e. fish stocks migrating north, sea ice melting, higher traffic in arctic)
- Develop new data; share it

Selected Comments from Participants – Alaska's Transportation Users

- Build rail line connection to trans-Canada
- Develop resources in rural Alaska
- Improve inter-community transportation (i.e. connectivity of ports, roads, rail and air)
- Partner with State, small businesses, agencies, tribes and local communities to accomplish goals
- Look at development vs. environmental concerns
- Strategically look at Port MacKenzie
- Develop comprehensive ports and harbors plan for Alaska
- Evaluate feasibility of regional transportation systems

Selected Comments from Participants – Alaska's Transportation Providers

- Improve permitting process with the Corps
- Engage State leadership in planning for ports and harbors
- Cost-share with local communities
- Respond to increased cruise ship traffic; identify who is responsible for clean-up and salvage
- Look at integrated marine transportation for large and small community facilities
- Cultivate cooperation from all agencies

Selected Comments from Participants – Other Government Agencies

- Use holistic approach in planning and project development
- Develop partnerships to get things done
- Include ports and harbors in State's Long Term Transportation Plan, with State as active partner
- Be smart about investing our limited funding dollars –strategic development planning
- Look at big picture and economic drivers
- Involve local communities, tribes and agencies in planning activities

Selected Comments from Participants – Alaskan Communities

- Include rural communities and tribal councils in process
- Train local people for future jobs using distance learning technology and on-the-job training
- Ensure visions and long term plans are flexible and collaborative (20/50/75 years)
- Develop more ways to share information and communicate
- Move Corps administrative offices into rural Alaska
- Promote “multi-use” of Alaska’s ports harbors (oil/gas, fishing, import, export)
- Install weather monitors in harbors, as well as airports

Action Items –
What Will We Do Together?

A partnership agreement and vision statement was developed by Colonel Wilson and his staff. It was signed by most attendees. Key State agency representatives indicated conceptual support and will pursue support at the State Cabinet level.

The overwhelming mandate from this group was the need for ongoing collaboration, comprehensive planning and leadership.

Develop a Long Range Comprehensive Plan for Alaska's Ports and Harbors

- Develop shared vision for Alaska navigation, transportation system
- Identify a facilitating agency to take the lead on a plan
- Form a steering committee
  - State, federal government, local agencies, USACE, private sector, local communities, tribal councils and other stakeholders
  - Engage Governor Palin and State of Alaska
- Include items such as: future demand projections, water resources, coastal infrastructure, funding and needed improvements
- Actively engage USACE planning skills to support State plan

Engage in Effective Communication

- Set up communication tools among stakeholders to keep everyone aligned
- Post draft reports, action steps, issues, development progress and projects
- Invite stakeholders and public to post comments and good ideas
- Hold regular *Alaska Regional Ports and Harbors Conference* to maintain momentum and achieve progress
- Link to DOT statewide transportation planning

Leadership

- Set timelines for action items
- Create accountability and responsibility
- Schedule regular meetings
- Maintain focus on responsible development
- Identify issues that need immediate attention and form smaller groups to work on them
- Continue to collect signatures for commitment to shared vision presented by the Corps

Conference documents and summary are posted online at

http://www.poa.usace.army.mil/en/cw/index.htm